

DUINE

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

MAYLA (MAY-luh)	Mayla is the faerie governess of Gwythonain. She should not look significantly older, however, than her charge.
GWYTHONAIN (GWITH-oh-nayn)	Gwythonain is the daughter of the faerie queen. She is a young, but not a child.
EÓGAN (ee-OH-en)	Eógan is a young mortal (duine) who has lost his sister. He should be a little older than Gwythonain.
WYNNE (WIN)	Wynne is the mortal sister who died and is then returned to life through the Grace of Gwythonain. She is slightly younger than Eógan.

SETTING

This play takes place in the forest of ancient Ireland.

Pronunciation

In the script, Celtic terminology is followed by a pronunciation guide in parentheses. These guides are an attempt to provide the most accurate pronunciations, although they are really still guidelines. For the words *daoine* and *duine*, for example, the strictly correct pronunciations are DEE-nuh and DIN-uh, however I personally like pronouncing them DAY-oh-EEN and doo-INE in cases where the audience would not get hung up on an improper Celtic pronunciation (I'm such a rebel!).

SCENE 1

(There is a young man sitting at the grave of his little sister. He is speaking, but we cannot hear him. As the scene begins, we see two faeries, Gwythonain and Mayla, walking through the woods.)

MAYLA

We should return. Already I can barely remember our path.

GWYTHONAIN

I remember it well enough. And I tire of seeing the same trees all...

(They stop, having noticed the young man. He cannot see or hear the faeries, however.)

What is that?

MAYLA

I think... No.

GWYTHONAIN

What?

MAYLA

I think perhaps it is... one of daoine (*DEE-nuh or DAY-oh-EEN*)).

GWYTHONAIN

Is it? I would see him more closely.

MAYLA

The queen left very strict—

GWYTHONAIN

My mother isn't here. And you wouldn't... Besides, there's no harm to look.

(The faeries approach the man, Gwythonain closer, Mayla hanging back. As they approach, we hear the man speaking.)

EÓGAN

...and mother still worries. She talks less and less each day. And each day I plead with her to come, but she will not. Always for some new reason.

GWYTHONAIN

To think, a mortal. The lore paints them hideous and deformed, but this one is not.

MAYLA

Gwythonain! Come away.

EÓGAN

Today it is her legs, and how they pain her.

(Over the next lines, Gwythonain studies Eógan, even waving a hand before his face.)

GWYTHONAIN

(Slightly overlapping Eógan's last and next lines)

You worry too much.

EÓGAN

Just as yesterday it was her feet.

GWYTHONAIN

He cannot see us.

EÓGAN

But I know the truth of it, even if she cannot face her own heart. She is alone. I think she barely hears me anymore.

MAYLA

Come away, child. You—

(Gwythonain has reached out and touched Eógan ever so lightly on his head. He thinks it is a fly that he attempts to brush away.)

Gwyth! You mustn't!

(Gwythonain brushes his hair again, and giggles. Again, Eógan bats at the annoyance, this time turning his head to look, and then back. This amuses her even more.)

GWYTHONAIN

Oh, hush. It is harmless play.

EÓGAN

I think that tomorrow I—

(Gwythonain taps him on the shoulder and jumps back. Eógan is startled. He jumps up and looks around for the source, but he cannot see her.)

GWYTHONAIN

You see? His eyes cannot pierce the Grace.

(Mayla stares at her until...)

Very well. We will return.

(The faeries begin to head off as the lights fade.)

SCENE 2

(Again, Eógan is sitting at the gravesite, talking but we cannot hear. Again, the faeries approach.)

MAYLA

Please!

GWYTHONAIN

Stop your meithering. I told you, if you do not wish to stay—

MAYLA

Do not speak foolishness. You know I cannot not leave you.

(Gwythonain turns around. She appears to be annoyed, but then suddenly it breaks and she is joyful, and hugs Mayla.)

GWYTHONAIN

Oh, Mayla. I know. And I love you! You know that I love you, do you not?

MAYLA

If you loved me, you would not give my heart such grief.

(Just as we think she might truly be upset, she smiles warmly and hugs Gwythonain back.)

GWYTHONAIN

Come then. I would hear what our duine (*DIN-uh or doo-INE*) is saying today.

(Lights go down as they start to move towards Eógan)

SCENE 3

(Again, Eógan is sitting at the gravesite talking silently. Gwythonain is lounging nearby, gazing at him as he speaks. She plays idly with a delicate pendant that hangs from a silver chain around her neck.)

EÓGAN

...they say that the son of the Tighearna (*CHEE-yearn-uh*) is very sick now. He grows worse as each day passes, and that it weighs heavy upon him. His moods are black, and he broods an ill humor even with his comhairleoir (*COR-lahr*).

(Mayla comes hurriedly onstage. She has been searching for her ward, and is distraught.)

MAYLA

Gwythonain! You foolish child! *(She does not respond.)* Gwythonain! Heed me!

(Eógan looks up and around, as if he heard something faint when Mayla called out.)

GWYTHONAIN

Is he not fair, Mayla?

MAYLA

He is mortal, child!

GWYTHONAIN

Mayhaps, but a fair one, I think. I have been considering...

MAYLA

You should come away from there.

(Gwythonain doesn't budge, and Mayla, resigned, asks...)

What? What have you been consi—

GWYTHONAIN

That I would speak with him.

(She stands, and walks over to him. She touches his hair, and he runs his hand through it in response. He nearly touches her hand, but she shifts it slightly to avoid this. It is the relaxed gesture of someone who has done this many times before.)

MAYLA

Please, Gwythonain. This fancy will end poorly. The daoine are like flecks of light. You cannot—

GWYTHONAIN

You fret over everything, Mayla!

MAYLA

Please, child. For me if not yourself.

(Gwythonain stares at Mayla for a long moment, then retreats from Eógan.)

GWYTHONAIN

Do you know why he comes here?

MAYLA

I do n—

GWYTHONAIN

He has a sister. And for some reason that I cannot discern, she has been put into the ground in this spot. He comes here to speak to her. Is that not strange?

MAYLA

It is their way. When loved ones have died, they take the—

GWYTHONAIN

What does this mean, died?

MAYLA

It means... Perhaps that is an answer I would leave to your mother. Come, the evening descends, and we will miss the feast if we tarry.

(Gwythonain turns to Eógan before leaving.)

GWYTHONAIN

Fare thee well this evening, my duine.

(She begins to follow Mayla off, but after Mayla has exited and before she has, she pauses just slightly. Taking the pendant in both hands, she turns back and says...)

I'll return upon the morrow.

(Eógan's head jerks towards her at these words that he has clearly heard, just as she takes her hands away from the pendant and rushes off stage. Eógan looks about, alarmed, and then lights out.)

SCENE 4

(Again, Eógan is sitting at the gravesite. Gwythonain is standing near, watching and listening. She fingers her pendant pensively.)

EÓGAN

The son of the Tighearna died four days past, and they say he has fallen into a fierce depression. He blames Fearghus (*FEER-gus*), and further did swear a terrible vengeance upon him. Mother says it is of no concern, but my heart lays heavy. I cannot help but fear what may come to pass of such oaths. It is the first time—

(As he has been speaking, Gwythonain has reached a decision, and taken the pendant in both hands again.)

GWYTHONAIN

What is your name?

(Eógan jumps up, startled and wary. He looks about, trying to find the owner of the voice.)

EÓGAN

Who is there? Come out, and stand where I might see.

GWYTHONAIN

What is your name?

EÓGAN

I am Eógan. Where are you, and who are you?

GWYTHONAIN

Why do you come here and speak to the stone?

EÓGAN

Lady or no, I will answer nothing more to a nameless shadow.

GWYTHONAIN

You are most fascinating, Eógan-duine. You may be at peace, for I would not allow any harm to befall you.

EÓGAN

Why will you not share your name? What is it that you hide?

GWYTHONAIN

Is it so important that you know my name?

EÓGAN

It is.

GWYTHONAIN

Why?

EÓGAN

Your voice is like a gentle breeze, and I cannot help but fear that in madness I am speaking only to the wind.

(She moves to stand behind him, and then takes off the pendant.)

GWYTHONAIN

Then turn, Eógan-duine.

(Eógan turns around suddenly, and sees Gwythonain. He is immediately struck by her beauty and faerie nature.)

EÓGAN

You are... *(words fail him)*

GWYTHONAIN

What? What am I?

EÓGAN

Beautiful!

(This affects her more than she expects. Her face lights up as she blushes. Then suddenly Mayla appears, and Gwythonain reacts. Eógan sees this, and turns around to see what is there. As he is looking, Gwythonain – feeling embarrassed – puts the pendant back on. When Eógan turns back, he can no longer see her.)

Lady? My lady? Where are you, my lady? Where have you gone?

(Mayla gives her a very stern look, and Gwythonain looks ashamed. She walks to Mayla, but then looks angry too. She deliberately turns back, walks over to Eógan, and touches his hair again. He reaches up to brush away the insect that he has always thought it was, and then realizes. He holds his hand on his hair, and looks towards where the faeries are. We might almost think he can see them, but as the faeries exit we see that he cannot, and the lights go out.)

SCENE 5

(Eógan is near the grave, and there is a basket nearby on the ground. He is not talking to his sister, but rather looking around.)

EÓGAN

Lady? *(Pause, as he looks around more.)* My lady?

(Gwythonain enters and approaches.)

Are you about, my Lady?

(She takes off her pendant when he is not looking at her.)

GWYTHONAIN

I am here, my Eógan-duine.

EÓGAN

So you are.

GWYTHONAIN

Always.

(Eógan smiles, and fetches the basket.)

EÓGAN

I have brought us a loaf and mead. Would you share it?

GWYTHONAIN

I would.

(Eógan beams in happiness and starts to take out the food.)

EÓGAN

(Nervously, unsure that it is worthy.)

And... this.

*(He holds out a wooden carving of a flower in bloom.
If this is hard to come by, one could use a Celtic knot or
some other symbol more easily obtained.)*

I made it. For you, if you would have it.

GWYTHONAIN

It is lovely.

EÓGAN

Then it is yours.

(She takes it and smiles.)

Come, let us eat.

GWYTHONAIN

Do you not wish to speak with your sister this eve?

(Eógan suddenly looks distraught, guilty.)

What is it? Have I given offense?

EÓGAN

Oh, no, my lady. Never that. It is only...

GWYTHONAIN

Does your sister think ill of me?

EÓGAN

No, nor would she would. It is guilt that you see. How could I forget...

GWYTHONAIN

Tell me of her, your sister. What is she called?

EÓGAN

Wynne, named after our grandmother. I was four years when she was born, and first to hold her new life, even before mother.

GWYTHONAIN

You hold her close in your heart.

EÓGAN

Oh, indeed. From that day forward, she was my charge. And no boy or man has ever held happier obligation. I would watch over as she played, and tell her our stories at the fire. At night, when the winds would masquerade as wolves or banshee, I would make her laugh until sleep came upon us.

GWYTHONAIN

Mother has told me that you place your beloved in the Earth when their spark has faded. Is this what became of her?

EÓGAN

It is. This winter past she fell ill when the snows came.

GWYTHONAIN

Why do you weep?

EÓGAN

I swore I would always protect my Wynne. That I would draw arms against dragons or Caoránach (*kwer-EN-ich*) herself before I'd see harm befall her.

GWYTHONAIN

But still she faded.

EÓGAN

There are things, I know now, against which no sword may be brought, no challenge thrown. Sometimes we fall without ever facing... Forgive me. I did not mean—

GWYTHONAIN

No, my Eógan-duine. What you say, I wish to hear. My people do not know sickness. Our light fades only when the will has gone.

EÓGAN

Then you are... eternal?

GWYTHONAIN

As eternal as the stars.

(He stares at her, the last of his reservations vanishing as he falls completely in love with this woman who will never fade. Lights out.)

SCENE 6

(Eógan and Gwythonain are seated near the grave. They are talking to each other, each clearly smitten by the other.)

GWYTHONAIN

Why do you find it so strange that I would feel as you?

EÓGAN

Because I simply cannot believe it. You are...

GWYTHONAIN

How can you doubt it? It has been a fortnight already, and have I not come to you every day?

EÓGAN

You have, although I will never understand why.

GWYTHONAIN

You are unfair to yourself, and I'll not tolerate such harsh words about my Eógan-duine.

EÓGAN

Will you still not tell me your name?

GWYTHONAIN

I will not.

EÓGAN

But why?

GWYTHONAIN

Names hold power, my love.

EÓGAN

You do not trust me.

(Gwythonain leans over and kisses him.)

If you will not, then I shall make a name for you. You will be... my Arienh (*ah-REEN*).

GWYTHONAIN

Arienh? I am to be your oath? (*She is surprised and touched*) And what oath is that?

EÓGAN

That never shall I give you reason for fear. You will suffer no pain at my expense.

GWYTHONAIN

Then let my name be Arienh, my Eógan-duine.

EÓGAN

Why do you call me that? Eógan-duine. What does it mean?

GWYTHONAIN

Duine means mortal. When I say—

EÓGAN

Then you name me this to remember that I am mortal?

GWYTHONAIN

Eógan-du... Eógan. Since the moment I first cast my eyes upon you, I saw you only as Eógan. And that is how I see you now.

(Eógan has gotten quiet and withdrawn.)

What weighs upon your mind, my love?

EÓGAN

No matter how I stand in your eyes, we cannot escape the truth. You are timeless, and I—

GWYTHONAIN

You are what you are. Think upon it no further, for there is nothing else that matters.

EÓGAN

But...

GWYTHONAIN

You have given me a name. I would give you a gift in return.

EÓGAN

Your company is treasure enough for a lifetime.

GWYTHONAIN

Aside, what is it that your heart desires most?

(Eógan's eyes involuntarily look to the grave of his lost sister, then snap back to Gwythonain.)

EÓGAN

There is nothing else. Only you.

(Lights out)

SCENE 7

(Gwythonain stands next to the grave. Facing her, and rather speechless, is Eógan's sister. She is dressed in dirty clothes, and holding Gwythonain's pendant, which she wears around her neck. They are staring at each other as Mayla rushes up. She looks in surprise, and slight horror, at the two, then walks up to the sister and opens her fist to see the pendant. Shocked, she looks at Gwythonain.)

MAYLA

Oh, child, what have you done? What have you done!?!

(Lights dim for just a moment, and then come back up on basically the same scene a few moments later as Eógan enters.)

EÓGAN

Arienh! I cannot tell you how much—

(Eógan stops in his tracks as he sees his sister. After a moment, he recovers and rushes to her.)

Wynne? Wynne! But you're... you were...

(He turns to Gwythonain.)

You? You have brought my sister back? How? Will she...?

GWYTHONAIN

You are happy?

EÓGAN

Happy? I am happy beyond words! This is a gift beyond imagination!

MAYLA

(With fear and some reproach...)

Indeed it is.

(But only Gwythonain can hear her.)

GWYTHONAIN

Then it is a gift for both of us.

(Eógan embraces her in passion and gratitude, as the lights fade.)

SCENE 8

(Gwythonain stands alone next to the grave, waiting. No one comes. The lights go down, and a moment later come up to her sitting. Still waiting. Lights down, and then up and she is sleeping. Then down, then up, and she is sitting, crying silently. Wynne enters, her gait slow. Wynne has clearly been crying, and in the scene it is clear there is something slightly wrong with her since her resurrection. Gwythonain watches her approach and sit.)

GWYTHONAIN

I do not understand. Where is Eógan?

WYNNE

Mother has died.

GWYTHONAIN

Where is Eógan? Why does he not come to me?

WYNNE

Mother has—

GWYTHONAIN

I do not care about that! Where is my Eógan? Why is he not here?

WYNNE

The Tighearna...

GWYTHONAIN

What?

WYNNE

The Tighearna's army came to the valley. Eógan...

GWYTHONAIN

(In desperation...)

Where is he?

WYNNE

Eógan did not realize they had come. He went to speak with the stonemason, and the Tighearna's generals found him. They... He is with the army now. He had only time to return for his woolens.

GWYTHONAIN

And now he is gone?

WYNNE

He asked that I bear you a message. He asked that I tell you that his heart remains here. With his Arienh.

GWYTHONAIN

Then here shall I remain until his return.

(Lights fade slowly.)

SCENE 9

(Gwythonain sits alone next to the grave, waiting. She holds the wooden flower he gave her. In time, Mayla appears.)

MAYLA

Hello, child.

(Gwythonain cannot hear her. Mayla takes out a pendant and holds it in both hands.)

Hello, child.

(Gwythonain looks around, trying to find the source of the voice. Mayla takes off the pendant, and Gwythonain sees her. There is a moment of excitement, but it fades quickly.)

Where is your duine?

GWYTHONAIN

I do not know. I am told he departed for a thing the daoine name 'war', but it seems a long time ago, and he has not returned.

MAYLA

And the Grace?

GWYTHONAIN

His sister Wynne wears it now. I do not know what has become of her.

MAYLA

And still you wait here, my little Gwythonain?

GWYTHONAIN

No. The power of that name has faded, and no longer holds meaning. Today and forever more I am Arienh.

MAYLA

Oath?

GWYTHONAIN

That never shall he give me reason for fear. I will suffer no pain at his expense.

Arienh.

MAYLA

But Mayla?

GWYTHONAIN

Yes, my child?

MAYLA

I am afraid he will never return, and the pain of my loneliness is like nothing I have ever known.

GWYTHONAIN

I am here, child.

MAYLA

Then how is it that I am still alone?

GWYTHONAIN

I will stay with you, child.

MAYLA

For how long?

GWYTHONAIN

Until your duine returns.

MAYLA

SCENE 10

(Mayla is sitting next to the form that was once Gwythonain, but is now either a calcified statue or a figure overgrown with vines and such. Mayla sits, waiting... waiting... waiting... and eventually the lights fade out.)